

Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., today said, "If Mayor Richard M. Daley does not take the bull by the horns and clean up the City of Chicago's corrupt and apparently often phony affirmative action program he could threaten the existence of affirmative action nationally. That's all this current batch of right-wing, ideologically driven, anti-affirmative action, conservative Republicans need to undermine affirmative action is for the most well-known Democratic Mayor in the nation to be exposed as someone who is abusing, misusing and manipulating affirmative action to meet some 'politically correct' affirmative action goals. I call on the Chicago City Council to hold hearings to correct the program before Congress or the U.S. Justice Department intervenes.

"The recent revelations of corruption continue to grow:

- Virginia Reyes - sister of Victor Reyes, one of Mayor Daley's key Hispanic political operatives - using her firm, Toltec Construction, as a pass-through for a white male-owned, suburban plumbing company in order to land a contract at O'Hare;

- In order to qualify as a minority firm a close friend of City Hall, Thomas Donovan, a white male Irishman from the 11th Ward, claims 49% ownership in a Hispanic firm, Quantum Crossings. The telecommunications company gets most of its business from city governments, including the Chicago Board of Education, the Chicago Transit Authority and the City Streets and Sanitation Department;

- Sam Sianis using his wife Irene as a front and the face of the Billy Goat Tavern at O'Hare. Those are three recent examples of a corrupt affirmative action program at Chicago's City Hall; and

- The longtime Daley pals the Duffs, a white family that falsely portrayed itself as being women- and minority-controlled, defrauded the city in obtaining more than \$100 million in contracts through the city's affirmative action set-aside programs.

"This is not affirmative action as it was intended or should be. It's denying minorities and women a fair shot, an equal opportunity, to compete for jobs, promotions, contracts and business

opportunities. It's currently fraudulent and corrupt! Implementing affirmative action the way Mayor Daley apparently is going about it could threaten the program's very existence. Anti-affirmative action rhetoric has been one of the Republicans' most emotionally charged and effective weapons used to split off working class and ethnic white males from the Democratic Party, using phrases such as 'reverse discrimination,' 'preferences' and 'quotas.' They argue that white males are being hurt and discriminated against because of affirmative action.

"Affirmative action, when run properly, *is* equal opportunity! It is a mechanism designed to combat discrimination by defining and creating a level playing field for everyone. It is a conservative legal remedy, growing out of past and present race and gender discrimination that preserves traditional American values such as equal opportunity based on merit.

"Affirmative action recruits minorities, women, and others as groups in order to ensure that individuals from these groups, which historically have been excluded on the basis of their group identification, were included in the pool for consideration.

"Once in the pool, individuals from discriminated groups now have an equal opportunity to compete on a relatively level playing field. Affirmative action has given them an equal chance of being chosen for a particular job, promotion, or admission on the basis of their individual qualifications and merit. Affirmative action succeeds only in getting the individual from a discriminated group into the pool for consideration. It does not guarantee that an individual will be selected for the opportunity or position.

"In addition, you have to be qualified in order to be considered - or qualifiable with reasonable compensatory assistance. It is illegal, under affirmative action laws, to require the hiring, promotion, admission, or granting of a contract to an unqualified person or company.

"If we are truly determined to overcome the legacy of discrimination we must devise a way of objectively *measuring* whether or not we are making progress. Thus, goals and timetables were instituted. Setting up and presenting phony but 'politically correct' numbers - as apparently Mayor Daley is doing - undermines legitimate affirmative action programs. Goals and timetables are just one way of more objectively measuring the effectiveness of an affirmative action plan.

"With a goal and a timetable, such as 'within five years we want to increase the diversity of our

company's workforce or our school's enrollment to 15 percent minority representation,' a school or company can evaluate and improve its programs. Any business organization that is purposeful accepts planning, setting goals, meeting timelines, evaluating, and adjusting plans so that it can actually reach its target within an allotted time frame. For business, this is standard operating procedure. Profits and jobs usually depend on strict adherence to such goals and timetables. Applying such objective business principles to affirmative action plans and programs should be seen as no different and just as beneficial, but the City of Chicago appears to be mismanaging its affirmative action program - yet we hear nary a mumbling word from the Chicago City Council. They should be demanding and holding hearings to clean up the stench surrounding Mayor Daley's affirmative action program," Jackson concluded.